

PATTERNS OF YOUNG ADULTS' PERCEPTIONS AND USAGE OF MOBILE PHONE: THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study draws on focus group discussions with semi-structured questionnaire development and convenience sample procedure to examine the uniqueness of mobile phone to the university students in two study locations: Benson Idahosa University, Benin City and Delta State University, Abraka in Nigeria, with the social construction of technology (SCOT) as a theoretical set up. Data derived from the participants' opinions on the respective questions through verbal discourse were coded by hand and analyzed through constant comparison method to arrive at consensual and non-consensual opinions of participants. The findings revealed the influence of parents and disposable income in the respondents' capacity to owe mobile phone usage and several patterns and functionalities to students was captured relative to determinant majority opinions. These findings provide insights for researchers and educators to understand the benefits of mobile phone in Nigeria and the advancement of mobile phone research in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Mobile Phone, Social Construction of Technology (SCOT), Social Behavior, Constant Comparison Procedure, University Students (Benson Idahosa University (BIU) and Delta State University (DELSU) & Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

The mobile phone has become the major attraction around the world, with people of different social-cultural orientation is becoming adopters and users of a mobile phone and its avoidance. The words *mobile phone* implies portable wireless handheld device and of digital convergence with flexibility of usage applications, anytime, anywhere (see Ganguin and Hoblitz, 2012). Further, Gog gin and Hjorth, 2009 as cited in Lasen, 2010) note that the mobile phone is increasingly becoming mobile media

AsIsosif (2010) explains that the mobile phone has become a critical component of contemporary society and a useful communication device that constitutes a vital part of daily life or billions of people around the world. Similarly, Rippin, (2005) notes that the emergence of mobile phone has presented an exciting opportunity to establish how technology developed to enhance the process of human communication behavior and a symbolic technological tool that gives meaning to daily life of users. Available figure from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), (2016) indicates that seven billion people (95% of the global population) is covered by a mobile-cellular network. This shows an unprecedented popularity of the system technology among a diversity of people around the world. Smith, Spence and Rashid. (2011) points out that the mobile phone has expanded human capabilities via opening access to timely and/or relevant information, and expanded possibilities for connectedness between people. Further, Luther and Kropivnik, (2011) described mobile phone as an expressive object with symbolic meanings and means for maintaining and establishing sociality. The authors emphasize that its

usage behavior cuts across different classes of people and culture, noting that young people are the most prolific users of the system device

Mobile Phone in Nigeria and Africa: Usage Evidences from Young Adults

Mobile telephony came on-board in 2001 following the Nigerian Government decision to overcome the unproductive analogue landline telephone infrastructure and service platforms from 1960s to 1999 period with 400,000 active lines being accessible to 140 million populations (Ekwu, 2008). This policy strategy helped put the country on a digital mobile phone platform and ownership of mobile device, and subscriptions to mobile network providers; MTN; Globacom; Airtel; Etisalat; Smile Communications (Kay, 2016; Kadiri and Alabi, (2016). Available data indicate that there are 154.5 million active users of mobile phone in the country (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2017).

Evidences are emerging on the usage of mobile phone in the country. For examples, Oyewole, (2014) found from the study on the reason Nigerian students own mobile phone that communication which includes sending and receiving text messages and making and receiving calls to parents, guardians and loved ones were the motivation. His finding was derived from the focus group discussion, made up of eight University students in Australia, four males and four females, aged from 19-27 years, through which investigated the reasons for mobile phone ownership and how the participants use the mobile service. Okafor and Malizu, (2014) examined undergraduate students usage patterns of mobile phone, finding that they used the device as a tool for socializing, staying in touch with parents and relatives as well as to promote interpersonal relationships. For Olatokun and Bodunwa, (2005) time management, personal safety and as a medium of communication were the students' perceptions of mobile phone usage.

Furthermore, the rest of Africa continent has embraced mobile phone, as a new paradigm of communication and other usable functionalities. Bornman, (2012) regards mobile phone as the 'mobile miracle' that has enabled the continent to leapfrog from the problems of telecommunication infrastructure and inaccessibility to services. Mafirakurwa, (2009) notes that the evidence of mobile phone is a blessing to those who never had access to landline telephones because of poor telecommunications infrastructure and the Pew Research Center, (April 2015) indicates that the proliferation of mobile phone networks has transformed communication in Africa, opening-up opportunities for Africans to enter the digital age and of information (see also Samii, 2015).

Researchers like Mungai, 2016; clickatell.com, 2017)notes that mobile phone revolution has provided opportunities for the continent to have over 700 million mobile phone ownerships and subscriptions to networks, to the possibilities of moving towards information society. The McKinsey's Africa Report, (2012) indicates that the youth population, aged between 16-34 year accounts for the growth of mobile phone ownership and subscriber to networks in the continent citing accessible income as critical motivation.

The relations of mobile phone and uses in Africa society has been studied with inspiring evidence being detectable. For examples, Bruijn, (2014) discusses the relations of mobility and communication, and argue that the evolution of mobile technology has become a social stabilizer in which social connectivity, belongings and moral relationships is the new reality and possibilities of a new world. The author therefore submits that mobile telephony has strengthened the glue of the African society. Gina, Hampshire, A bane, Munthali et al, (2012) examines the usage patterns of mobile phone among young people in three societies: Malawi Ghana, and South Africa. They found as follows; First, mobile phone offers flexibility of use and is of very low cost. Second, social/chatting to family and friends (calls and text

messages) and maintaining social networks were the main reasons for mobile phone ownership. Third, mobile phones are symbols of success that can enhance social status of users. Fourth, mobile phone offers young people physical mobility which helps avoid surveillance and experience freedom, including sexual freedom. The researchers saw age and gender as critical factors in mobile phone possession and use in the three study locations, citing 15-18 years as the most active group of mobile users. Further, Lesitaokana (2015) studied mobile phone adoption among young people in Botswana and found the need for connectedness as a major motive for mobile phone adoption citing income capacity as easy access to the device acquisition.

Evidence from University Students

University students constitute a major segment of young people in African society who have become digital natives or digital generation and are more enlightened to understand the usage skills of mobile phone. Studies on the university students' usage behaviour of mobile phone in Africa are unfolding. For examples, North, Johnston and Ophoff, (2014) explains that South African university students use mobile phone for socializing, and for safety and privacy purposes. Akanferi, Aziale, and Asampana, (2014) found from the study of mobile phone usage among university students in Ghana that making and receiving calls, browsing the internet, chatting on websites, listening to music and radio were the most favorable usage activities. Mogambi's (2015) study of the university students' usage of mobile phone in Nairobi revealed that majority of the respondents across the various campuses and years of student use calendar and calculator, internet to derive information for assignments and exchange information about lecture timetable. Further, Mlozi, Mussa, Mapunda et al, (2016) notes from the study on the academic benefits of owning and using a mobile phone among the undergraduate students at Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania that communication and conversation was the main indicator of the device ownership, and the frequency of communication behaviour was done in the evenings. The study also revealed the importance of disposable income in the affordance of mobile phone and expendable money to run their phone. These discursive reviews demonstrate the importance of mobile telephony to the younger generation of university students in Africa society, unfolding as well, the students' perceptual field of mobile phone for self-interest, needs and functions

Theoretical Backgrounds

The theoretical position underpinning the exploration of university students' perceptions and usage of mobile media lies in the social construction of technology (SCOT). The theories provide a more in-depth understanding of how students define the utilization of mobile media in their society (See Klein and Kleinman 2002; Peia, 2009; and Jones and Bissell, 2011) and for which three conceptual frameworks have been identified. The first of these is the interpretative flexibility: the notion of technological artefacts or products being subjective of users' interpretation or negotiation to arrive at a specific value and meaning. This suggests that students in developing society have different views about the mobile phone, physical object, seen, and use in diverse ways and functions, with freedom of mobility. The second of these is the relevant social group and this refers to a group of individuals sharing the same interest and value orientation, suggesting that the students are specific social group in Nigeria universities with educational orientation and lifestyle, and they are likely to possess the ability in using the devices for self-benefits. The third of these is the socio-cultural environment of users which could potentially shape the use of technology. This implies that the socio-cultural environment in which technology is used needs to be understood (see Bijker, 1992: 2001). This suggests that the wider context of the students' socioeconomic status and educational orientation could influence individual interpretative positions regarding

ownership and usage of mobile phone.

Wong, (2008) explains individual users of mobile phone define its usage behaviour in relation to the peculiarities of their utilization experience while Karanansios, (2010) points out that mobile users present more experience for analysis in terms of what the system technology means to them and what benefits are being derived from its usage. The view of both scholars on linkage of social constructivism for research on mobile phone centres on the issue of the individual user as the key player in the evaluation of the use of the system device in society. Oksman (2010) also notes that mobile phone can be considered from the viewpoint of symbolic articulation, cultural meanings and interpretation. She went on to say that individual perceptions and usage experience play a useful role in the overall assessment of mobile phone in terms of usage and functions.

More importantly to identify is what some scholars refer to as intervening variables in media device perceptions, ownership and usage. For examples, Campbell (2007) emphasized age and gender as critical factors in the users' adoption and perceptions of mobile phone. Drotskyetal, (2007) and Ames, Morganetal, (2011) looked at the importance of social class in relation to mobile phone usage and as a basis for understanding the participants' choices regarding technology and their evaluation of it. Furthermore, disposable income relative to mobile phone has drawn the attention of scholars like Koutras, (2006:108), Kalba, (2008a; 2008b), Tschmuck, (2013). As they put it, the youth in today's society grew up in the era of computer driven technological gadgets and have more disposable income than past generations. As a result, their spending power has equally overtaken that of their parents. Moreover, ITU, (2004) notes that youth in developed society devote a significant proportion of disposable income on mobile products, citing for instance, that in US young people spent USD 155 billion, or an average of USD 84 per week. The figure was based on 2000 data (also see Drotsky, Gap et al, 2007).

What do Scholars Think about Mobile Phone?

According to some scholars, mobile phone constitutes the most important technological device in modern life and of the 21st century 'mobile world' which has enabled users to interact, communicate and socialize in virtual communities (Ganguin and Hoblitz, 2012; Jerpi, 2014). Rosen, (2004) stated that the mobile phone is now a dependable gadget, simplifying communication, offering convenience and facilitating new forms of social behaviour. Furthermore, Arminen, (2007) notes that mobile device allows newly emerging types of communication that enable or contribute to the development of new forms of social activity, thereby having an impact on the patterns of the establishment and maintenance of social connections. He then submits that mobile communication is now part of the development of a mobile society which everyone is expected to be available all the time everywhere. Campbell, (2005) sees the mobile phone as a status symbol for young people, enabling them to communicate without physical constraint. Moreover, young people are able to arrange or rearrange social functions extremely quickly, leading to a more fluid culture of informal social interaction. Moreover, Green and Singleton, (2009) point to the importance of mobile phone in the cultivation of friendship and that young people are at the heart of the system usage. The authors explain that today, young people's friendships are now being formed and maintained through the use of digital media, and that this enables them to stay in touch with friends both locally and globally.

The views of other scholars on the importance of mobile phone on social behaviour with personal communication and mobility, social interaction and social relations and identity projection as the basis for assessment are discussed under different sub-headings below;

Personal Communication and Mobility

The progression toward personal communication in society has been driven by the emergence of mobile phone with mobility by use as a means of extending the value and benefits of the system gadget. Generally, the mobile phone is now seen as a common artistic effect in both private and public settings, and for which the device's symbolic meaning is linked to conversation and dialogue in the system utilization (Campbell and Park, 2008). The use of mobiles for personal communication according to Kreutzer, (2009) includes making a phone call, sending a text message, giving someone a missed call, and sending a free 'please call me' message. These uses constitute the basis of mobile phone usage activities and benefit to users in a society.

Rousan, Rafat, Aziz and Christopher, Anne, (2014) reported that text messaging serves five communicative functions for students' users of mobile phone namely friendship maintenance, socialization, school collaboration, coordination, and exchange of information. This observation was based on their study of young Saudi university students. Further, Xia, (2012) explains that the popularity of text messages is influenced by three main factors: immediacy, convenience and low cost, and variety of uses for different users in society. Xia cites the experience of China, where texting is widely used to chat, exchange greetings, pass-on jokes and flirt.

Furthermore, researcher like Dresler-Hawke and Mansvett, (2008) points to the importance of voice calls in personal communication medium in mobile phone usage behaviour serving as a means of maintain friendships, keep in contact with family and, most common to make social arrangement (see Kamran, 2010). The connecting relations of mobile phone in personal communication can be summed up with the views of scholars like Chatterjee, (2014) regards that mobile device is an object of communication which plays a decisive role in social connection, and Hyman, (2014) and Rousan and co-authors, (2014) who points to the significance of text messages as a platform that is changing the nature of social interaction as well as serving as communication functions for users of mobile media. Furthermore, the benefit of using mobile phones for voice calls and text messages in personal communication cuts across demographic groups in society, with young people constituting major users of these communication medium (Pew Research Center, 2010). Furthermore, scholars such as Campbell (2007) and Yang, Kurnia, Lee and Kim, (2008) identifies the mobility attributes of mobile phone, based upon which the use of the device in public places or indeed in any location or any vicinity is viewed as a common phenomenon in mobile utilization behaviour. Similarly, Ishii (2006; Yangetal, 2011) identified contextual mobility as a factor in explaining the utilization of mobile phone in public and private spaces, based on freedom and control decisions relating to control incoming calls or communication transactions by themselves.

Social Relations and Identity Projection

There is mounting evidences that the use of mobile phone has transformed the physical social relations of human society into virtual social relations, where by individual users of the mobile device interact with each other without face to face contact. They have also created a new way of expressing identity in public and private places through self-projection, based on one's mobile phone (Yuan, 2012). Thus, the term 'fashion or wearable or worn on the body or electronic clothing technologies' have been used to describes the way mobile phone users project their identity or a particular image of themselves through their mobile phone (Campbell, 2005; Katzand Sugiyama, 2005; Campbell and Park, 2008).

The revolutionary impact of mobile phone has been in creating new forms of pursuing social relations and friendships connection (Yuan, 2012; Miklas, Golliu, Cahan and Saroiu, 2007).

A number of studies have indicated the role of mobile phone in both relationships formation and identity projection. For examples, Campbell and Russo, (2003) surveyed 194 undergraduate students in Midwest University, U.S.A. (60% female and 40% male) and carried out a follow-up focus group interview with 30 undergraduate students to ascertain their perceptions and use of mobile phone. They found that the students 'usage of mobile phone serves as a means of self-display and identity expression, and safety and security. They also noted from the focus interviews with the students that social interaction with family and friends influenced their interest to obtain mobile phone as well as serving as a collective social resource for them. Furthermore, Chen and Katz, (2008) noted from a survey of 40 students and three focus group discussions on perceptions and pattern of mobile phone use among college students and their family that the use of the system technology is a necessity to ensure regular contact with their families, that the use of the system technology was essential to ensure regular contact between the students and their families as well as to share experiences, and receive emotional and physical support.

Social Interaction: The Goffman Paradigm

Social interaction relates to individual's behaviour which is externally open and noticed by other individuals or people around. It can mean social processes by which individuals' action and reaction take on face to face contact. This definition indicates individuals as the core of social interaction in social life and on which individual's understanding of interaction in everyday situations becomes crucial. This explains how individuals' social interaction occurs in a given social reality and on which '*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* by Goffman's (1959) provides further understanding. The term self-presentation defines the nature of a social situation of individual social interaction. Goffman claims that if people are physically "co-present" in a space, some information will be mutually sent and received regardless of their intentions [2]. That the human body exhibits and emits various types of signals, such as height, gender, race, look, line of sight, hair, clothing, footwear, belongings, voice, tone, language, loudness, scent, and body action, and so "co- present" people receive such signals even if they do not intend to receive voluntarily. Goffman [2] refers to such continual and unavoidable communication as "face-to-face interaction." which also involves verbal communication and that the human body perpetually emits nonverbal signals (see Nakamura, (2015).

Goffman Paradigm and Mobile Phone Usage Behaviour

Concern for Goffman principles in understanding the nature of mobile usage in society has begun to emerge, with scholars' interpretation of how the system device influence users' social interaction and identity performance. Mobile phone is a life object visibly displayed that most often is seen by users as physical object with attribute of value and connotation. Thus, in face-to-face interaction, users hold their device for others to observe and for immediate perception in terms of what the users are, in relation to socio-economic status. The users' display of mobile device connotes Goffman's claim of self-expression and of good impression in the eyes of others, implying that the notion of mobile phone as fashion and status device is relevant to indicate. In other words, the aesthetic value or the iconic appearance of mobile phone has made it fashionable and wearable by users (see Fortunali, 2004; Katz and Sugiyama, 2005, Srivastava, 2005:115).

Campbell, (2008) sees mobile phone as an extension of the users' physical selves and of fashion, and on which young people are strongly linked. He cited studies to indicate mobile phone-fashion-relationship and drew on the study by Green (2003) who found that all teens interviewed had extensive knowledge of handset styles and designs, and that the youngest individuals were most interested in the fashion of the technology. Similarly, Hjorth, (2006:8) notes mobile phone as a marker of tastes, values and status.

The overall themes arising from these review points to the following submissions. First; the popularity of mobile phone among young generation indicates unique evidence of its acceptability and its affordance in different society and Africa including Nigeria. Second; the functionalities of mobile phone as a medium of communication with texting and calling as medium of interactive relationships, exchanging information and chatting) and mobility of use in private and public places and Third; the expressive use of mobile phone as symbolic object in everyday life of users demonstrating further its users- identity performance relationships

This paper aims to advance knowledge on how university students perceive mobile phone in Nigeria. The students are integral part of 67 million youth population between the ages of 15 and 35 years (Olatunji, 2017). Three research questions have been advance to examine the university students' ownership of mobile phone and functionalities to them;

- **RQ1:** How do university students own mobile phone?
- **RQ2:** How do the university students sees mobile phone being expressive object of everyday life?
- **RQ3:** In what way does the university students uses mobile phone and with what usage patterns?

The principles of SCOT provide the framework to address these questions. This indicates that the university students as social group tell stories about mobile phone ownership and its meaning to them. The students answer to each question represent the process of interpretative flexibility (students' responses to question comes in different view-points) to unfold the usage experience of the device

METHODOLOGY

The explorative data for the study on how university students perceive mobile phone in their own society comes from research conducted from 1st September to 31st September, 2011 in two study locations: DELSU and BIU. The semi-structured questionnaire was design to reflect the socio-economic characteristics of the university students, perceptions of mobile phone as object of self-display and identity, and usage mobility in private and public places. The focus group discussions were employed to seek the students' opinions on these issues, with a view to achieve a better understanding of what mobile phone holds.(see CampbellandRusso,2003; Hemmer, 2009).

Population and Sampling, and Procedure of Focus Group Sessions

The participants for the focus group discussions involveatotalof32undergraduatestudents drawn from two universities in Nigeria:18 students from Delta State University, Abraka and14studentsfromBensonIdahosa University, Benin City. Four focus group discussions were conducted and of different sessions which was made up of nine men participants and nine women participants each at DELSU. Similar focus group discussions were held at BIU with seven men and seven women participants. The gender composition of discussion group sessions was aimed at balance representative opinions on mobile phone perceptions and usage (why they owned mobile phone and how they used them).

The focus group participants were all between the ages of 18 and 26 years old. The choice of the study locations lies on First; Delta State University, rural located publicly funded through government treasury and easily affordable tuition fees policy. Majority of the students are from the low and middle class parents and social life. Second, Benson Idahosa University, urban located and privately funded with high tuition fees policy. Students are mostly from affluent background and a mixed of middle and upper income parents. The possibilities of accessible disposable are high among this students group compared to students at DELSU. Both students group receives lectures in English language in terms of

written and spoken expressions.

The study used non-probability sampling techniques in which convenience sample strategy (also known as grab sampling or opportunity sampling) was utilised in selecting the participants for the focus group discussions in respective university. This was done with the assistance of co-ordinators that were recruited for the purpose. Participants were all full-time undergraduate students and users of mobile phone and each focus group sessions lasted 90 minutes with time given to discuss freely on respective questions they were asked.

Findings and Analysis of Data

The findings were drawn out from the focus groups data collected through the semi-structured questionnaire and coded by hand while the analysis and interpretation involve inductive reasoning and constant comparison method to arrive at consensual and non-consensual responses (see Thomas, 2006; Carter, Thatcher and co-authors, 2011; Zhang and Wildenmult, 2015). This aim to provide insight to the participants' perceptions and use of mobile phone, based on interpretative process (see Trochim, 2006). The results present the respondents as social group in Table 1 and the individuals' participants was designated as subject or 'S'. This was influenced by the work of Palen, Sakzman and Young's, (2000); Reed and Payton, (1997); Debbie, (2006)

STUDY RESULTS

Table 1: Respondents' Socio-Economic Characteristics and Year of Mobile \ Phone Ownership: Delta State University and Benson Idahosa University

Subject	Age	Gender	Faculty/Course of Student	Mobile Phone Ownership
S.1	28	Male	Faculty of Science/ Geology	4
S.2	27	Male	Faculty of Education/ Business Education	4
S.3	26	Male	Faculty of Law/Law	6
S.4	25	Male	Faculty of Science Laboratory /Pharmacology	6
S.5	25	Male	Faculty of Arts/Theatre Arts	6
S.6	29	Male	Faculty of Social Sciences/Mass Communication	6
S.7	24	Male	Faculty of Engineering/Civil Engineering	10
S.8	27	Male	Faculty of Health Sciences /Medicine	7
S.9	23	Male	Faculty of Applied Sciences/Mathematics	5
S.10	24	Female	Faculty of Applied Sciences/Industrial mathematics	5
S.11	26	Female	Faculty of Education/Guidance and Counselling	6
S.12	22	Female	Faculty of Law/Law	7
S.13	25	Female	Faculty of Science Laboratory/Biomedical	9
S.14	24	Female	Faculty of Arts/English language	10
S.15	25	Female	Faculty of Social Sciences/Mass Communication	8
S.16	24	Female	Faculty of Health Sciences /Dentistry	5
S.17	22	Female	Faculty of Pharmacy/Pharmacy	4
S.18	24	Female	Faculty of Agriculture/Agricultural Economics	7
S.19	27	Male	Faculty of Information & Computer Science	5
S.20	25	Male	Faculty of Sciences /Biochemistry	8
S.21	26	Male	Faculty of Law /Law	7
S.22	21	Male	Faculty of Social Sciences /Mass Communication	8
S.23	25	Male	Faculty of Education /Mathematics Education	5
S.24	27	Male	Faculty of Agriculture /Agricultural Economics	8
S.25	26	Male	Faculty of Arts/International Studies and Diplomacy Studies and Diplomacy	6
S.26	27	Female	Faculty of Social & Management Sciences/ Business Administration	10
S.27	26	Female	Faculty of Education/Business Education	8

Table 1: Contd.,				
S.28	20	Female	Faculty of Applied Sciences/Microbiology	8
S.29	20	Female	Faculty of Law/Law	9
S.30	23	Female	Faculty of Sciences/Mathematics	6
S.31	20	Female	Faculty of Information& Computer science/ Computer science	5
S.32	25	Female	Faculty of Arts/English Language	6

Source: Extract from Respondents Ethic Form, Administered and Retrieved Prior to Focus Group Discussion

Sessions: Delta State University, Abraka and Benson Idahosa University, Benin City

Ethic form spelt out the voluntary nature of the FGDs with consent to participate or withdraw in relations to their wish (see Ling and McEwen, 2010)

Table 1 represent individual participants in the focus groups, denoted S1- S32 and of different age categories and educational orientation by faculties. This suggests that the participants are of differing social background, parental affiliation and cultivation of value system in terms of life style and socialization. For examples, the number of years of mobile phone ownership in terms of usage years suggests that the respondents' accessible disposable income might play a part in the early ownership of mobile device and usage exposure. The findings from the focus group discussions of participants at DELSU and BIU on the *RQ1* how do the university students possess mobile phone? Revealed surprising responses and they all point to similar comments. The comments cited here are representative

S1; My parents bought it for me except S24: who said I bought

my mobile phone through money from my upkeep

The question on how they fund the use of their mobile phone yielded similar majority comments and on which representative opinions are indicated. For examples,

S13: Money from my parents while S21: said personal savings

These opinions appear to ally with the views of scholars who pointed to the importance of disposable income as potential means of becoming mobile device adopters and users (see Koutras, 2006; UK Tschmuck 2013; Nairaland report, 2013; Mussa, Mapunda et al, 2016).

Mobile Phone: Expressive Object and Identity Enhancement

The concern for mobile phone becoming valuable object and of identity enhancement has drawn the attention of scholars (Campbell, 2005;Katzand Sugiyama, 2005; Campbell and Park, 2008; Luthar and Kropivnik, 2011; Yuan, 2012)and on which the *RQ2* how does the university students sees mobile phone being expressive object of everyday life? was put forward to assess respondents' opinions. The literature on social relations and identity projection provided the ground to pursue this issue and the responses from the focus groups provide useful indication on the relations of mobile phone and identity performance, and their comments reflect on mobile phone as a fashion accessory. Assessing the 'why' aspect of their opinion, reference to selective comments yields some insight into their thoughts on this issue. For instance,

S5: Said yes because nowadays phones are used to complement dressing while S28: indicate I see myphone as fashion gadget because it is expensive and it gives me a certain identity

On the issue on whether they see their mobile phone as an indicator of status and pride, the opinions of the participants offer useful insight in to their thoughts. In the words of few respondents:

S13: Yes because when you are using an expensive phone, you belong to certain class of people and it also [shows] your identity in the midst of the peer group. As S15: puts it 'Yes, to an extent, because my phone is expensive and I can show-case it to the world.

These comments show that the words *class*, *expensive*, *complement dressing* and *show case it to the world* used in connection with their phone demonstrates the power of the device as a physical object with expressive meaning and symbolic value to users. The users' display of mobile device corroborates Goffman's claim of self-expression and of good impression in the eyes of others, implying that the notion of mobile phone as fashion and status device is relevant to establish, depicting further the connotation of aesthetic value or the iconic appearance of mobile phone as being fashionable and wearable by users (see Fortunali, 2004: pp. 42-62; 2005, Katz and Sugiyama, 2005; Campbell, 2008). This implies that the nature of the system device, reference to mobile phone use by the students help define their identity in terms of projecting themselves in the presence of their peer groups and perhaps helps to launch the min to virtual society. Thus, the individual's mobile phone use could serve as markers that allow others to know who they are and what they are, arguing further that the connection of socio-economic status of the respondents was critical to spot out. This connection again links back to the comment made by a discussant:

S18: My phone is expensive and it gives me certain class.

This comment in relation to those cited earlier clearly indicates the connection of socioeconomic status of the respondents' mobile phone ownership and identity projection. Furthermore, Campbell and Park (2008); ITU (2004), and Luthar and Kropivnik, (2011) views that mobile phone has become a status symbol and a form of identity for youth in society provide support for the respondents' opinions on mobile phone and users class and socio-economic status.

Mobile Phone Utilization and Social Behaviour

The research question three regarding *in what ways does the university students use of mobile phone and with what usage patterns?* Was addressed from the literature on the importance of mobile phone in social behaviour as discursive evaluation. The words *social behaviour* lies at the heart of social life of individuals in society and in which university students belong as social group. According to Abraham, Anastasiya and Smith, (2010) the widespread possession of mobile phone has dramatically increased people's ability to connect to others and fulfil the need to belong or affiliate, resulting into increase opportunities for social interaction, creating chances to establish and develop personal relationships with friends and other forms of social group. Further, Palen, Salzman and Young's, (2000) remarked that the usage of mobile phone has been influenced by the social contexts and lifestyle of users. Thus, how mobile phone is influencing the university students' social behaviour was inspiring to follow-up. The literature on social relations and identity provide the set up for the exploration, with friendships and sense of self identity performance as the main focus of exploring the feelings of university students at DELSU and BIU. The discussion therefore begins with friendship.

Friendship

The findings derived from the respondents' comment on mobile phone and social life shows that the aspect of friendship was important to them. The majority of the respondents affirmed the uniqueness of mobile phone in building friendship. The comments of participants were therefore cited;

S13: said it has given me the opportunities to make new friends as well as connected me to friends and family members I don't see regularly while S26: commented that communication with friends and social relations has

been enhanced

These opinions are reflections of the usefulness of a mobile phone in the participants' friendship building in society. Further support on this submission was drawn from the work of Green and Singleton, (2009) who assert that mobile phone plays decisive role in the cultivation of friendship and that young people are at the heart of the device usage, which enables them to stay in touch with friends both locally and globally. Shklovski, Krant and Cummings, (2008) refer to friendships as voluntary relationships based on equality.

The next issue that emerges from the focus group interviews at DELSU and BIU was the relations of mobile phone in forging a sense of self and identity performance and one which respondents' opinions were unique to follow up the discussion.

Sense of Self and Identity Performance

Participants' opinions on the role of mobile phones in promoting a sense of self were crucial to indicate and social networking sites as a platform for social relations and identity formation was mostly expressed. Some comments are representative;

S14: My social relations have improved through interaction on social networking sites and S26: said mobile phone has me connected to new friends in far-away countries through social networking sites

These opinions are fundamental to show the virtual life of the focus group participants has enhanced beyond the traditional face to face interactive relations and on which the value of social networking sites exemplify the sense of self and the advancement of social identity. This observation reinvents Goffman supposition that social life is a stage in which social relations is driven by exchange of actions, reactions and social connections.

Mobility of Mobile Phone Use

In this modern age of technology, the "Communication" is a prominent

Factor to connect with each other and this process has become more robust

Due to the invention of modern communication devices

Source: Raskoff, (2008)

This statement denotes the relations of mobile phone and mobility to users. The term 'mobility' in this article implies public and private use of mobile phone in a special setting moderated by the interactive status of users. As Mlozi, Mussa, Mapunda. et al, (2016) explains the portable nature of mobile phone communication medium means that it is often used in public spaces.

The literature on personal communication and mobility, provide the set up for further inquiry, on which the opinion on whether respondents' perceptions of mobile phone use influence user personal communication behavior and mobility was pursued. Respondent's use of mobile phones within the public contextual mobility drew significant opinions and most of the respondents reported the usage of their device everywhere. Selected comments provide useful illumination and some of these comments are therefore cited;

S4: I use my phone everywhere so I can reach others and be reached and S28: said I use my phone everywhere because important information comes in anytime

These comments demonstrate the flexibility or convenience of a mobile phone to the participants. Perhaps to argue that waits, White and Young, (2008) suppose that the strength of mobile phone lies on convenience and ease of contact with others, time and location notwithstanding

Moreover, the views of a few respondents specifically indicate the use of mobile phone anywhere in cases of emergency.

S16: My phone is always with me because anything may happen

When going to the hostel at night S29: I keep my phone with me

All the time because of recent attack on campus, it was mobile

The phone call that led to quick intervention

These opinions appear to reinvigorate the linkage between mobile phone use and personal safety (Nasarand Wener, (2007). As the Pew Research Center, (2010) reported majority of young people use their mobile phone for safety, security and ease of communication in crisis situations. Oksman, (2006; 2010) notes that safety and security as mostly connected to mobile phone use by young people in Finnish Information society which was also conceptualized as micro-coordination,

Regarding private contextual mobility with respect to family context, voice calls were another important link to mobile phone usage. Ishii (pp. 348) refers to the family context as one reason in which mobile phone is used by young people to maintain or manage their privacy and to keep in touch with parents or maintain their social networks outside of parental supervision. Youngpeopleinthiscontextincludestudentswhooftencommunicatewiththeirparents while on campus through their mobile phone.

The question of how they would take calls if they are physically around their parents and siblings was subjected to inquiry. This extended the discourse in the reviewed literature. The responses from the participants show their willingness to take calls in the presence of their parents as observed in the majority opinions. The following comment provides insight into their opinion:

S9: I will excuse myself and answer the call as a sign of respect

S29: I will excuse myself and answer the call when around

My parents

These expressions indicate an obvious example of decision-making and control behavior which can be viewed as a resemblance to disruption of hegemony; the idea that the person looked at the caller identity before answering the call (Humphrey, 2005).

Social Construction of Technology Theory and the Study of University Students

Perceptions and Use of Mobile Phone: Relationship Assessment

Bray, (2007) argues that technology is socially constructed and the need for a social constructivist approach is necessary in order to understand the thoughts and usage value which underline the potentials of the technology for users. (See also Campbell and Russo, (2003).

The emergence of mobile phone is widely regarded as a new technological platform today and has become a major component of daily life, and on which its role in the lives of university students in Nigerian society is equally valuable to establish. What the students think about mobile technology and how they use it has been the focus of this study, for which the social construction of technology (SCOT) was set up to achieve a better understanding of the students' perceptions of the device (see Bijker, 1992; 2001). The SCOT is all about mind probing and of subjective opinions on mobile phone technology.

The findings from the focus group interviews of university students at BIU and DELSU on their perceptions of mobile phone reflected individual students' interpretations of what the device means to them. The students' opinions on mobile phone involve two levels of discursive analysis. The first of this is the concept of university students as a social group comprising men and women at DELSU and BIU who grow up in their own unique way in terms of socialization (education, social values and parental affiliation in terms of class (see Table 1 on the respondents' characteristics). Bringing the students together in studio-based focus group discussions provide explorative assessment of mobile phone in terms of meanings and functions to the students

The second level of university students' opinions of mobile phone usability experience extends the principles of the interpretative flexibility (different opinions on the usage of mobile phone). The findings of the students' opinions on their gadget, reported *in italics*, are indications of their' ability to construct the system technology based on their knowledge, social background and life styles. Campbell and Russo, (2003, 2007); Luyt, Zainal, et al, (2008) explains that people shape technological usage by way of personal expressions and interpretations suggesting that their usage ability and educational orientation might have played a part in viewing their device and relating symbolic meanings.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings from the qualitative interviews through focus group discourse at DELSU and BIU on how the university students in Nigeria perceive the adoption and use of mobile phone unfold several submissions. The theoretical position of SCOT provides a clear operational relationship with the study which helped advance knowledge on mobile phone research. The findings from the respondents' interviews and responses to questions show the usefulness of a mobile phone to them. This was obvious in the research question on *how does the university students own mobile phone* and evidence of avoidance (respondents' ownership of the mobile phone) through parents and disposable income was apparent. This extends the popularity of mobile telephony in a developing society where the landline telephone was inaccessible to the populace. Further findings relating to research, question two on *how does the university students sees the mobile phone being expressive object of everyday life* revealed valuable respondents' opinions, affirming the significance of the mobile phone as an extension of user pride and personality projection (mobile phone as fashion device and class formation). Furthermore, the benefits of mobile phone to respondents was also evident in responses to research, question three *in what ways does the university students uses of mobile phone and with what usage patterns?* The respondents' expressions on their mobile device usability indicates several usage behaviours citing the constructive role of mobile phones in friendship development and social relations, communication, interaction and mobility in public and private space, with voice and text messages as supportive medium of connectivity (*see respondents' expressions in italics*). The overall deduction on the research question one to three was the interpretative flexibility of respondents' opinions to respective questions, affirming the validity of SCOT in the study. Moreover, the findings from the study demonstrate the credibility of mobile phone in the everyday life of young adults, including university students to which they are becoming the mobile digital natives of the

21st century and of new media society.

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